



NATIONAL PUBLIC
HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Department of Food-borne and Water-borne Diseases

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL DATA FOR BOTULISM IN GREECE, 2004-2020

MANDATORY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM

Botulism is a rare but serious paralytic illness caused by a neurotoxin produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum* and sometimes by strains of *Clostridium butyricum* and *Clostridium baratii*. There are six kinds of botulism: a) foodborne botulism (caused by the consumption of foods that contain the botulinum toxin), b) infant botulism (caused by ingested spores which germinate in the infant intestine and produce bacteria that release toxin), c) adult intestinal toxemia botulism (same cause as the infant botulism), d) wound botulism (caused by toxin produced from a wound infected with *Clostridium botulinum*), e) iatrogenic botulism (result of accidental injection of the botulism neurotoxin into the systemic circulation of a patient instead of the intended therapeutic locus), f) inhalation botulism (result of inhalation of aerosolized botulism neurotoxin) [1].

The typical symptoms of botulism include double vision, blurred vision, drooping eyelids, slurred speech, difficulty in swallowing, dry mouth, and muscle weakness. Infants with botulism appear lethargic, feed poorly, are constipated, and have a weak cry and poor muscle tone. These are all symptoms of the muscle paralysis caused by the bacterial toxin. If untreated, these symptoms may progress to cause paralysis of the respiratory muscles, arms, legs, and trunk [2].

Time trend

Botulism is one of the less frequently reported diseases of the mandatory notification system in Greece. During the period 2004-2020, only one confirmed case was reported in 2009 regarding a 3.5 months old infant, resident of Peloponnese region, two confirmed

cases were reported in 2017 regarding 3 and 2 months old male infants, residents of Attica and Peloponnese region, respectively, and one possible case reported in 2017 regarding a female 59 years old, resident of Central Macedonia.

Conclusion

The mean annual notification rate in EU and EEA/EFTA (European Economic Area/European Free Trade Association) countries was low, according to the latest published data in 2019 (0.2 cases per 1,000,000 population) [3]. The low number of reported cases of botulism in Greece does not allow comparisons with the data from other European countries.

References

[1] Heymann D, MD. Control of Communicable Diseases Manual, 20th Edition, 2015, American Public Health Association.

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Botulism. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/botulism/definition.html>

[3] European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Surveillance Atlas of Infectious Diseases. Botulism - Data by Country and Year. Current time period: 2019. Available from: <https://atlas.ecdc.europa.eu/public/index.aspx>

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